

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
-----281657Z 030698 /42 S
O 281549Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3205

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06934

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY, HABIB AND SCHAUFLE FROM LAKE

PLEASE PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR AARON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: MEETING WITH OWEN APRIL 28

REFERENCE: LONDON 6892

1. WE MET WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN THIS MORNING TO REVIEW THE "MINUTE" SUMMARIZING YESTERDAY'S DISCUSSIONS. HE HAD STUDIED THE OPTIONS DESCRIBED FOR NEXT STEPS AND WANTED TO GIVE US HIS "INSTINCTIVE REACTIONS".

2. HIS PARAMOUNT CONCERN IS THAT IF THE BRITISH PROCEED WITH BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, WITH THE US IN ONLY A "COMPLEMENTARY ROLE", THEN THE ENTIRE INITIATIVE WILL BE SEVERELY UNDERMINED. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT AT THE FIRST SIGN OF RESISTANCE BY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, THE UK AND US HAD BACKED DOWN. TO GIVE IN IMMEDIATELY ON THE NATURE OF THE US ROLE WOULD DAMAGE OUR CREDIBILITY AND NOT BODE WELL FOR THE FUTURE WHEN WE WILL SURELY HAVE TO STAND UP TO FURTHER DEMANDS FROM THE NATIONALISTS AND FROM SMITH. MOREOVER, HE SAID, WE RUN THE DANGER OF BOTH ISOLATING
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THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND IN EFFECT CONCEDING THEY HAVE A VETO OVER HOW THE PROCESS UNFOLDS. (OWEN ADDED HE IS CONFIDENT THAT NKOMO IS FLEXIBLE ABOUT THE US ROLE AND WILL PARTICIPATE IN ALMOST ANY POLITICAL PROCESS THAT DEVELOPS).

3. OWEN SAID HE IS INCREASINGLY SKEPTICAL THAT A FULL-

BLOWN CONFERENCE WILL ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE OR EVEN BE NECESSARY. PERHAPS A FORMAL LANCASTER HOUSE PROCEEDING COULD CAP THE INFORMAL BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. IT COULD BE POINTED OUT TO THE NATIONALISTS THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT ATTEND THIS FINAL LEGAL STAGE. A DECISION ABOUT A CONFERENCE IS THEREFORE NOT VITAL NOW. "BUT I AM NOT PREPARED TO ENTER INTO BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITHOUT YOU. I PROBABLY COULD NOT BRING ALONG MY (CABINET) COLLEAGUES, IT WOULD BE SEEN AS IF WE WERE BACKING OFF, AND WE WOULD LOSE MASSIVE CREDIBILITY. I WOULD RATHER PUT THE WHOLE THING ON THE SHELF."

4. OWEN THEN SUGGESTED THAT THE US AND UK ANNOUNCE THAT WE ARE PROCEEDING WITH JOINT BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES (LEAVING ASIDE ANY REFERENCE TO AN EVENTUAL CONFERENCE). IF ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE PARTIES WANTS TO SEE US TOGETHER, FINE; IF ONE OR ANOTHER WANTS TO SEE US SEPARATELY, THAT IS EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE. WE WOULD REGARD THIS AS A TRIVIAL MATTER. SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD PRESERVE THE PRINCIPLE OF A JOINT INITIATIVE, WHICH IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT WITH REGARD TO SMITH, WHILE MINIMIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMALLY DESCRIBING THE US ROLE.

5. WE SAID THAT WE WOULD TAKE WHAT HE HAD SAID BACK TO WASHINGTON AND WOULD HOPE WE COULD RESPOND SOON. WE ASSURED OWEN THAT THE PURPOSE OF OUR DISCUSSIONS IN LONDON HAS BEEN TO FIND THE RIGHT FORMULA THAT WILL PERMIT THE INITIATIVE TO PROSPER. THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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AFRICAN REACTION TO OUR ROLE, PARTICULARLY IN DRAFTING A CONSTITUTION. WE WANT TO PROCEED JOINTLY IN THE WAY THAT MOST PROMISES SUCCESS. WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING OPTIONS WHICH ALLOW US TO GO AHEAD WHILE MINIMIZING THE PROCEDURAL QUESTION OF THE US ROLE. OWEN AGREED AND SAID THE US NEED NOT INVOLVE ITSELF IN THE DETAILS OF A CONSTITUTION BUT AMERICAN MUSCLE COULD WELL BE NECESSARY TO BREAK DEADLOCKS ON CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES SUCH AS THE FRANCHISE. "THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE TO BE IN THE TALKS." HE SAID HIS HOPE WAS THAT THE US COULD PLAY A "RADICAL ROLE" OF SUPPORTING "ONE MAN ONE VOTE".

6. OWEN SAID IT IS IMPORTANT TO ATTACH AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL TO A SPECIAL BRITISH OFFICE IN DAR ES SALAAM THAT WOULD CONDUCT THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS. THE PRESENCE

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3206

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 06934

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OF THE OFFICIAL WOULD UNDERSCORE THE JOINT NATURE OF THE OPERATION. THE OFFICIAL WOULD ALSO PROVIDE CONTINUITY THROUGH THE MAZE OF DISCUSSIONS. ESTABLISHING A BRANCH OF THE OFFICE IN SALISBURY COULD COME LATER, HE SAID, AND IN PHASED STAGES. (WE POINTED OUT AGAIN THE DIFFICULTIES OF SENDING AN AMERICAN TO SALISBURY.)

7. WE DESCRIBED FOR OWEN THE PROBLEMS WITH CONGRESS OVER THE ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND, STRESSING THAT THE FUND COULD ONLY APPLY TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THAT ANY HINT OF SPECIAL ADVANTAGES FOR THE WHITE COMMUNITY COULD DOOM THE FUND IN THE US. OWEN SAID THERE MUST BE AN ELEMENT IN THE FUND ATTRACTIVE TO THE WHITES AND THAT IT IS IDLE TO PRETEND THIS IS NOT VITAL TO BUILDING WHITE CONFIDENCE. WE POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE EQUALLY IDLE TO THINK SUCH A FUND COULD PASS IN CONGRESS. THE ADVANTAGES TO WHITES WOULD COME THROUGH THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ZIMBABWE ECONOMY. OWEN SAID WE MAY HAVE TO BE TOUGH WITH MANY PEOPLE ON THIS QUESTION AND THAT THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING A RHODESIA SETTLEMENT IS NOT LIKELY TO WIN FRIENDS ALL AROUND.

8. OWEN SAID HE IS IN NO HURRY TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS. THE ANNOUNCEMENT COULD COME AFTER MAY 6 AND HIS MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY. HE SAID
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HE IS CONSIDERING INVITING NKOMO AND MUGABE TO LONDON,

AND WE INFORMED HIM THE SECRETARY WOULD BE SEEING NKOMO
HERE ON THE SIXTH.

9. WE MENTIONED OUR PERSONAL CONCERN THAT, AS THE INITIATIVE PROCEEDS, THE US MAY BE SEEN AS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING AN AGREEMENT. OWEN AGREED AND SAID THAT DURING HIS TRIP HE HAD CONSTANTLY EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO US OR UK TROOPS INVOLVED, ALTHOUGH HE ADDED THAT HE HAD IN PARLIAMENT LEFT THE DOOR OPEN SLIGHTLY FOR DISPATCHING INDIVIDUAL UK OFFICERS.

10. OWEN AGREES THAT THE US AND UK SHOULD JOINTLY STUDY MEASURES FOR TIGHTENING SANCTIONS AND RESPONDING TO INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES ON RHODESIA. HE SAID WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL ABOUT SQUEEZING THE RHODESIANS NOW BUT SHOULD BE READY WHEN THE TIME COMES.

11. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH GRAHAM AND OTHERS, GRAHAM SAID THEY WOULD DEVELOP TODAY A PAPER AND DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT ALONG THE LINES OF OWEN'S PROPOSAL THAT WE COULD BRING HOME WITH US. HE THINKS THE ANNOUNCEMENT COULD COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS FROM LONDON AND WASHINGTON.

12. THEY AGREED THAT THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS AS WELL AS THE OTHER PARTIES SHOULD BE INFORMED BEFORE AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

13. WE THEN HAD FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND. WE WERE NEGATIVE ABOUT ANY VISIBLE PROJECT PLANNING BY THE BRITISH WITH THE SMITH REGIME, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE LIKELY NEGATIVE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION.

14. THEY SAID WE COULD CERTAINLY, IN OUR CONGRESSIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFORTS, MAKE REFERENCE TO THE STRONG IMPORTANCE OWEN
PLACES ON THE FUND. SPIERS

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